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Publishing to Find Comrades: Constructions of Temporality and Solidarity in Autonomous Print Cultures

Stephen Shukaitis and Joanna Figiel

ABSTRACT Open source publishing, in all its versions and mutations, is an area of research and media practice that has become much more popular recently. It is precisely because of this the questions it raises for cultural production are today all the more pressing. How does a form of media production where the good produced is given away to people sustain itself? How can it produce livelihoods for its associated "below the line" editorial workers, as well all the other associated forms of cultural labor undertaken in the production chain, from distribution to retail? This essay considers some of these questions, not from a general perspective, but rather from how they filter through and affect the nature of autonomous print cultures. For these print projects questions about labor, conditions and the sustainability of the project are all the more pressing because of how they relate to and are embedded within the goal of the social movement organizing that they emerge from.

There is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made.¹

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari

The ecology of practices . . . is a function of the multiplicity of constraints and causalities and unintended meanings and effects that go into make up the situations in which particular forms of value or usefulness are produced. These are situations of co-dependence—or events . . . as reciprocal capture..., where what matters here and now is a certain 'holding together with others,' although not in consensus as much as symbiosis.²

Joe Kelleher

"One publishes to find comrades!"³ This declaration by André Breton neatly encapsulates a key, but not often explored, conception and motivation that underlies the functioning of autonomous print cultures. For what Breton says here is not a facile declaration, but really something that is worth reflecting on to consider changes in the current and shifting relationship between publishing, politics, and cultural labor more generally. It is precisely *not* that one publishes to propagate and spread an already conceived idea; this is not a publishing of revelation, of bringing consciousness to an already imagined fixed audience. Rather, Breton is describing something that might be called a publishing of resonance. It is not a publishing practice that is necessarily intent on trying to convince anyone of anything, but rather is working towards establishing conditions for the co-production of meaning. This is a publishing that takes the production of publics, or more accurately what Michael Warner calls counterpublics, as the core of what it does and is.⁴ Thus, publishing is not something that occurs at the end of a process of thought, a bringing forth of artistic and intellectual labor, but rather establishes a social process where this may further develop and unfold.

In this sense, the organization of the productive process of publishing could itself be thought to be as important as what is produced. This is what Deleuze and Guattari gesture to by saying that a book's content and production methods are the same. Joe Kelleher might say that both aspects emerge from the ecology of practices from which the text emerge and which it takes part in holding together. How is that? It follows logically from the idea that one publishes in order to animate new forms of social relationships, which are in turn made possible through the extension and development of publishing. Publishing calls forth into itself, and through itself, certain skills of social cooperation that are valuable and worthy, even if what is produced as an end product perhaps is not an exalted outcome. Perhaps that is not so important at all. In short, publishing is the initiation of a process where embodied processes of knowing and understanding are produced and reproduced, rather than the creation of fixed objects where complete understandings are fixed and contained. The production of the community of shared meaning and collaboration, the production of a public, contains within it a wealth that is often greater than a single text. The production of the text can only be valuable because of the social relationships with which it is embedded and through which it produces meaning.

This essay explores, based on fifteen years of involvement and research in autonomous print cultures, the forms of sociality produced within their organization processes.⁵ In particular, it explores the connections and overlaps between recent academic debates around open-source publishing and how these matters are handled within more directly politically oriented print projects. Open-source publishing, in all its versions and mutations, is an area of research and media practice which has become much popular recently. It is precisely because of this popularity that the questions it raises for cultural production are today all the more pressing. How is a form of media production, where the goods produced are given away to people, able to sustain itself? How can it produce livelihoods for its associated "below the line" editorial workers, as well all the other associated forms of cultural labor undertaken in the production and chain, from distribution to retail?⁶ Is open-source publishing another area where, as figures such as Jaron Lanier would argue, the dynamics of digital production and consumption have effectively gutted and destroyed all the middle-class jobs previously available, only to replace them with a much smaller handful of people employed by scribd.com, and the outsourcing of the production of digital hardware?⁷ This essay will consider some of these questions, not from a general perspective, but rather from how they filter through and affect the nature of autonomous and independent publishing.⁸

Project Background & Method

The research underlying and informing this essay originates in seventeen years of participation in politically oriented media production and publishing. This has included working in radio and music production, journalism, and thirteen years as part of a longstanding, politically oriented arts and media publishing collective that has released nearly 500 titles during its existence. This longstanding involvement should not be understood as "pre-theoretical" in content but rather as constituting a form of observant participation that over the years increasingly raised and presented questions about the organization of media production. During the past nine years one of the authors has edited an open-access book series focusing on the overlap of avant-garde art, labor, and politics. While it is slowly becoming more common in the English-speaking world for open-access efforts to include book production as well as journals, particularly among academic presses, it is still less common than in other languages. This skepticism about open-source publishing is relatively common among left-oriented publishing houses that might be expected to take a more critical approach to questions of intellectual property

and ownership. But this is perhaps not all that surprising given production and economic models involved.

This long period of involvement in open-source media production led the authors to explicitly formulate a research project around questions of the nature of openness and the production of sociality within autonomous print cultures. As a part of this project, they conducted interviews over several years with people working for publishers, infoshops, distributors, and archives, primarily in the Greater London area. The guiding orientation in selecting this range of projects, as opposed to only publishers, is that there is more to the production of autonomous print cultures besides just the production of the media itself. There is a broader media ecology of different roles and positions that exist. In other words, publishers do not exist by themselves, but in a broader set of relationships through which media is produced and circulated. The goal of the research was to understand how forms of open-source print production exist within and as part of these circuits rather than in an artificially constructed isolation from them.

The logic of exploring different aspects of a media ecology is that it allows for getting a sense of the different roles played within the broader process of circulation. A concise table included below gives an overview of different autonomous print projects in the Greater London metropolitan area and the various roles and functions they take on. These are roles that are either important to movement politics and cultures, even if they don't necessarily present themselves that way and often may not appear that significant at all. This disjuncture came up in a conversation with a core member of Freedom Books, the longest running anarchist publisher and bookstore in the UK. He thought that when he came to London he would discover a space that would be "thriving with militants who were all ready for going out and fighting the Nazis or the cops or smashing the state" but instead encountered it as a space where usually you would find "one bloke going in a room making himself cups of tea on a regular basis."² This is, needless to say, somewhat less dramatic than what was imagined. But in the long run it may indeed be just as important when one considers how much of the sociality of political organizing is held together by rather non-exceptional activities of endless conversations and support, many of which take place over cups of tea.

Project	Type / Role Played
Corporate Watch	Research, campaigning, magazine
Freedom Books	Infoshop, publisher
Feminist Archive	Archive, event & meeting space
Lawrence & Wishart	Publisher, books & journals
Mute	Publisher, magazine, online, books
Active Distribution	Publisher & distributor
AK UK	Publisher & distributor
Housmans	Bookstore, events space
Through Europe	Digital writing platform
International Times	Previously print, becoming digital

The positioning and emergence of different projects greatly shaped how they viewed their activity and role. Members of Active Distribution, which developed out of the punk scene and anti-hunting campaigns, tended to understand book production and distribution as a logical development of the DIY zine production found within the punk scene. From that perspective, the use of short run printing and open source approaches are just other sets of tools that are up for use. In comparison, the Feminist Archive is less concerned with questions of producing media and more so on the collection and preservation of texts with the goal being to pass on the experiences and ideas of feminist

organizers between generations. The goal is not simply to record and preserve history but to re-activate and make this history useful to the present.

The social embeddedness of projects within political milieus have key effects on the content they produce and distribute. It is not surprising that publishers with a political orientation would use their political orientation to inform their editorial decisions. But the connection is sometimes more direct. For example, the activities of a group such as Corporate Watch, both in terms of their research and publishing, are largely shaped by the pressing concerns and needs of the organizing campaigns they work with. Their activities are not based around abstract questions, around quality divorced from social context, but by the needs of present situation. As described by their members, these decisions are motivated by a desire to facilitate long term involvement in political organizing, which is essential given how the amorphous and ephemeral nature of existing structures functions. This can be contrasted with a project like Through Europe, an online publishing platform, which functions more like a gallery, curating series of conversations and debates. The temporality produced by that approach is less pressing, less directly linked, even if still in relationship with everyday political concerns.

A worker from Housmans emphasized the relationship between political organizing and bookstores, adding that this kind of reciprocal support is very important but does not happen nearly as much as it could. The varying projects and spaces tended to be embedded in, or connected to, different constellations of networks and social relationships. This varied from Active Distribution's emergence from the punk scene and networks of touring bands (which was felt to have diminished in recent years) to the more traditional party affiliations that had previously characterized publishers like Pluto Press and the distributor Central Books, even if they had ceased to exist a number of years ago. While not all projects interviewed discussed these forms of mutual interdependence and support in the same terms or ways, notions around this did tend to reoccur fairly often. Most notably, this seemed to come up when discussing how forms of new digital technologies and open-access practices could have the capacity to disrupt the social relations of print production and circulation, and perhaps bring an end to certain projects. An editor from Lawrence & Wishart suggested that widespread adoption of open access could lead to the folding of a large number of independent publishers. Similarly, someone from Housmans worried that moving to digital-only publishing could have adverse effects on physical bookstores. This was not seen to be an absolute negative, but rather a case of how changing conditions require rethinking and discussing the role played by various actors within circuits of print production and circulation.

These concerns were not only about open access but also about the adoption of new tools and methods, such as the use of short run printing. A member of AK UK, which functions both as a publisher and distributor, noted the difficulties often caused when an existing title is moved to short-run printing. This is because short-run printing involves higher per unit production costs, and thus higher prices, with the end result often being that a book ends up costing a higher price that likely will be acceptable to university libraries but is often off-putting for most readers. In the end, this leads to a restriction and shrinking of what is available and circulated, which is paradoxical as the stated goal of moving to short-run printing is to keep a title in print. The question then is less whether the use of short-run printing (or any other digital technology for that matter) is good in itself, but rather what effect it has on the project's overall goal. In an article in *Strike Magazine*, Jon from Active Distribution argued for distinguishing radical publishing on the basis of its independent DIY spirit rather than a reliance on pre-packaged tools or approaches, which he compares with flat pack furniture, adding that how to draw that distinction is a "never-ending argument."¹⁰

Resources, Organization and Free Labor in Autonomous Media Production

"Booksellers are rather odd. This is not surprising since we have all managed to escape or avoid more regular forms of work."¹¹

David Batterham

Thus, while the question concerning open source might initially appear to be one of technology, it is equally, if not more, a question around access to and control over resources and power. In other words, who has access to resources, how, and what projects are able to continue (and even thrive) despite not having access, at least commercially, to significant resources. It may seem surprising that autonomous print projects rely on forms of free labor, particularly given how much this has come under intense scrutiny elsewhere in the arts and cultural economy. Within autonomous print culture, discussions around the ethics of free labor are not approached in isolation but are embedded within larger questions about resources and the organization of people's lives. An editor from Lawrence & Wishart emphasized that much of the work of publishing is invisibilized labor. In other words, it mainly takes place in the background and is not thought of much, not only by readers and the public but sometimes by authors as well. It was emphasized how this work is important even if it is often not appreciated or even recognized. This echoes the analysis made by socialist feminists around the discounting and devaluation of social reproductive labor.¹² This argument is further driven home by the Lawrence & Wishart editor pointing out that publishing is predominantly a female industry as it is background work, where the publication, careers, and egos of primarily male authors are facilitated by invisibilized female labor. Kathleen Fitzpatrick has expanded on this in her work, analyzing how unseen and unpaid labor is absolutely indispensable to academic publishing, in particular the peer review process, as well as its other aspects.¹³

This is not to reduce everything to a question of remuneration. It does, however, point to a certain kind of difficulty or tension that was acknowledged by people from Housmans. As they described it, relying on free labor in their operations put themselves in somewhat of a difficult ethical position. But much like the comparison they had made before, they understood being an activist bookstore as a form of political organizing. And they stuck with this comparison when considering the issue of free labor. Thus, in the way that one would not typically be expected to be paid for engaging in social movement organizing (aside from the appearance of magical Soros money), it was suggested that these were primarily political activities done for their own good rather than as a job. A more positive spin on this idea of non-payment can be seen in the approach of Active Distribution. Active Distribution chooses to not pay themselves, to deliberately remain a smaller project. This is not because they are not capable of scaling up into a larger publishing and distribution operation which pays. Rather, the drive is to keep Active Distribution as an operation that deliberately keeps away all that comes along with becoming a full-time operation. This enables them to add only a very small margin to the distribution costs of books. Thus, it is often possible to purchase radical books from Active for a much lower price than anywhere else. And this enables Active to make available books, pamphlets, and other forms of media more widely and cheaply than would be possible otherwise. Members of Active support themselves through part-time jobs or other arrangements rather than relying upon their publishing and distribution work as employment.

Other projects tend to support their operations through some form of cross-subsidization. Housmans' building was donated by a pacifist priest. This is important as, given the price of real estate now, it would be virtually impossible for a new bookstore to

function as Housmans does while paying commercial rent. The editors from Mute emphasized cross-subsidizing editorial and publishing work with technology and consulting work, or from projects with universities. This can be compared with the members of AK UK or Corporate Watch who pay themselves for their work, but as only part-time jobs, and thus end up relying on other sources of income, whether from other jobs or from social benefits. There were various contextual factors around housing and local conditions that allowed people across various projects to keep doing what they wanted to do with them despite the incomes derived from them not being sufficient. But this was also seen to be another restriction on who could be involved, which was also felt to be somewhat problematic. Overall it seemed quite common that there was some form of cross-subsidization of the publishing project happening, though varying in what form it took. An editor from Lawrence & Wishart claimed that historically nearly every radical publisher has started with someone (or a collection of people) putting funds in to start the project without which survival would not be possible. In some ways, the use of free labor could be understood as just another form of cross-subsidization in the form of time rather than currency. The question then, as phrased by editors from Mute, is how to balance out these tensions in the mode of cross-subsidization used, and hopefully without making it, as they felt their own project had become, “too complex.”

The question then becomes less whether relying on free or volunteer labor is inherently a problem in itself, and more a question of what is produced through these free or invisible labors.¹⁴ If editorial work is a kind of social reproduction, this would be then to ask what does it socially reproduce? Can it take part in what Beverly Skeggs has described as the process of imagining personhood differently that is possible from within autonomist working class practices of valuing differently?¹⁵ Do the circuits of autonomous print cultures serve to reproduce social capital and notoriety for authors that is built on unacknowledged collective efforts? Or do they create different circuits of value production and sociality while spreading and developing political ideas? The answer is, not surprisingly, more than a bit messy. It's not always very easy to clearly to determine precisely how a particular print project is engaged in such a process. What can be said is that in instances where it appears someone is attempting to use the dispersed processes of autonomous print culture for personal advancement or careerism without giving back to the project, it often leads to denunciations and intense debates.

Autonomous print cultures ultimately exist as modes of creating and shaping affordances in media and political ecologies. This concept of affordances, coming from ecological psychology, describes modes of environmental perception, it describes how the characteristics of objects enable and facilitate (or constrain) patterns of interaction.¹⁶ Media forms, both in production and circulation, also have their affordances, enabling and preventing patterns of interaction. The affordances of media forms are not set in advance, they are solely determined by technological form. Rather it is a question of how technological form of print production intersects with social form. What do the media forms and methods utilized tend to facilitate in social relationship and organization? Do they have a demand character tending to emphasize the collective social relations that are produced? The difficulty arises when a certain form of “openness” is celebrated, and fetishized, that serves to gloss over and further invisibilize the relations and process of print production rather than referring back to and drawing out the relations and processes. Iranian philosopher Reza Negarestani frames the problem in that openness is not a given condition that is already understood, but rather a process of understanding how “our openness and consequently our modes of interaction are determined by our capacities. We can only be open to contingency within certain specific limits that we can afford.”¹⁷ The openness of open publishing is thus not to be found with the properties of

digital tools and methods, whether new or otherwise, but in how those tools are taken up and utilized within various social milieus.

Conclusion: Towards an Autonomous Media Logisticality

self-organized infrastructures . . . through which difference is organized. . . .
[These] new collective structures of small, translocal micro-organizations that are neither artist collectives nor artist run initiatives, nor art centers . . . and that are being used to produce, and that are being generated for research, production, learning, gathering, dissemination, and action”¹⁸

Marion von Osten

In *Digitize This Book!* Gary Hall, one of the cofounders of Open Humanities Press, accurately describes how the ethics and politics of open-source publishing do not come to us in an already manufactured way, but rather they have “to be creatively produced and invented by their users in the process of actually using them.”¹⁹ This is precisely what this research has found. It is not that autonomous print cultures have either totally embraced or rejected the digital tools most commonly used in open-access publishing, whether academic or otherwise. Rather their use is not dealt with as an abstract question, but rather part of a series of larger considerations around the social relations of print production, distribution, and circulation. These are questions that become part of building the temporality and sociality of the milieus from which they emerge.

Thus, what we tend to see are not unified answers to the question of best ways to use digital print technologies, but rather different forms of adoption or rejection that are particular to varying projects. The use of digital tools becomes another part of what Marion von Osten describes as the infrastructure of small-scale collectives, widely varying in their operations and taking part in the ongoing production of difference. Autonomous print culture functions as a form of what Ned Rossiter calls logistical media.²⁰ While Rossiter is mainly discussing software and media that is used to organize the operations of the logistics industry, there is some sense in applying the concept to autonomous print culture. For Rossiter, the key function of logistical media is not just operational in a technical sense, but shaping the subjectivity of labor. For Rossiter, logistical media are those that determine our present situation, even if they are often not recognized, operating in the background. Autonomous print cultures operate very much in a similar manner, operating in the background organizing memories and histories of political organizing, and often serving as a concrete infrastructure through which organizing occurs.

Autonomous print cultures serve to shape subjectivity of transversal relationships operating between the different projects discussed. They function as a transversal sociality. But unlike a logistics of command and operational control, they function as logistics from below, as part of what Fred Moten and Stefano Harney describe as the logisticality of the undercommons.²¹ Ultimately, autonomous print cultures are not about print, or just about print, but rather the worlds and times produced by and through print cultures. In that sense, they are far from examples of best management practice and closer to models of world building. As someone from the Feminist Library quipped, “our problem is we’re all radicals, we are not managers, we don’t know how to manage”—and this was suggested as being the abiding problem of collective projects since the 1970s. The irony is that, despite not thinking of themselves as managers, in certain ways that’s exactly what they are—or at least organizers. But what is being organized is not the maximization of surplus value for shareholders, but the growing of other kinds of value, and the continued development of other forms of value.

Jan Voss from Boekie Woekie, an artist bookstore in Amsterdam, describes how their space functions less like a traditional business, but more like “a continuous performance . . . walkable sculpture in progress . . . mental dance floor . . . an art school . . . a sponge, saturated with a mixture of playfulness and tears of sadness and laughter.”²² Voss continues to say that none of the founders of Boekie Woekie ever really intended to become booksellers, rather it was a necessary function that was taken on and helped them to interact and accomplish what they wanted to with each other and in the context where they were operating. This is the role of autonomous print cultures, to build forms of temporality and tools for relating in the present. The exact purposes are not given in advance, but found and elaborated together.

The politics of autonomous print culture must start from a question: What is the openness to the world produced through the social relationships of publishing that we currently find ourselves in? This is not a question that can be answered by looking at the politics of media production just by themselves, nor the labor involved in the production of media, no matter how directly political or not they might appear to be. Rather it is a question of media ecologies, where print politics are embedded within larger ecologies of media production, circulation, distribution, and consumption—and at a time when the difference between these previously distinct actions have tended increasingly to blur into one another. It is not just a question of the best way to organize autonomous print and media production, although that is an important ask, but also the best ways to organize the publics and undercommons that are articulated through autonomous media production, and which feedback through and support the continuing development and lifeworld of autonomous media production. Like Breton would still say today, one publishes in order to find comrades—not merely to find comrades as the consumers of information or media, but rather as co-conspirators and accomplices.

Notes

1. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 4. [↗](#)
2. Joe Kelleher, “A Golden Surface: On Virtuosity and Cosmopolitics,” in *International Politics and Performance: Critical Aesthetics and Creative Practice*, ed. Jenny Edkins & Adrian Kea (New York: Routledge, 2013), 108. See also Spheres Editorial Collective, “Ecologies of Change,” *Spheres* Number 2 (December 2015): <http://spheres-journal.org/2-ecologies-of-change-editorial/>. [↗](#)
3. Andre Breton quoted in Gareth Branwyn, *Jamming the Media: A Citizen's Guide Reclaiming the Tools of Communication* (Vancouver: Chronicle Books, 1997), 52. [↗](#)
4. Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002). [↗](#)
5. This includes one of the authors, Stephen Shukaitis, working as a member of the Autonomedia editorial collective since 2004, and the other, Joanna Figiel, working and collaborating on a range of print-media projects for over a decade. Autonomedia is a Brooklyn-based publisher of radical arts, media, politics, cultural theory, and philosophy books. Since 2009, Stephen has also edited the Minor Compositions imprint series, which is an open source publication series focusing primarily on the overlaps of autonomous art, politics, and culture. The research informing this essay developed out of questions and concerns that presented themselves as part of ongoing editorial and organizational work on these projects (as well as other, related ones.) [↗](#)
6. John Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). [↗](#)
7. Jaron Lanier, *Who Owns the Future?* (London: Penguin, 2013). [↗](#)

8. For a more general background on publishing and print in the UK see Bradley, Sue, Ed., *The British Book Trade: An Oral History*. London: British Library, 2008., Deuze, Mark, *Managing Media Work*. London: Sage, 2010., and Erickson, Lee (1996) *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Publishing, 1800-1850*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press. For more on zines and underground publishing see Duncombe, Stephen (2008) *Notes from the Underground*. Bloomington: Microcosm., and Stewart, Sean (2011) *On the Ground*. Oakland: PM Press. [↗](#)
9. All quotes which are not otherwise attributed come from interviews conducted as part of the research underpinning this essay. [↗](#)
10. Jon Active, "An Anarchist Guide to Distribution," *Strike Magazine* 6 (2014), <http://strikemag.org/an-anarchist-guide-to-distribution>. [↗](#)
11. David Batterham, *Among Booksellers: Tales Told in Letters to Howard Hodgkin* (York: Stone Trough Books, 2011), 7. [↗](#)
12. For more on this see Federici, Silvia (2012) *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*. Oakland: PM Press., and Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The Problem with work: Feminism, Marxism, antiwork politics, and postwork imaginaries*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press. [↗](#)
13. Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy* (New York: New York University Press, 2011). [↗](#)
14. For more on this, see Vishmidt, Marina and Kerstin Stakemeier (2016) *Reproducing Autonomy: Work, Money, Crisis and Contemporary Art*. London: Mute Books. [↗](#)
15. Beverley Skeggs, "Imagining Personhood Differently: Person Value and Autonomist Working-Class Value Practices," *Sociological Review* 59, no. 3 (2011): 496–513. [↗](#)
16. J. J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1979). [↗](#)
17. Reza Negarestani, "Contingency and Complicity," in *The Medium of Contingency*, ed. Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011), 13. [↗](#)
18. Marion Von Osten, *Marion Von Osten: Once We Were Artists: A Bak Critical Reader in Artists' Practice*, ed. Tom Holert and Maria Hlavajova (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2016), 27. [↗](#)
19. Gary Hall, *Digitize This Book! The Politics of New Media, or Why We Need Open Access Now* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 27. [↗](#)
20. Ned Rossiter, *Software, Infrastructure, Labor: A Media Theory of Logistical Nightmares* (London: Routledge, 2017). [↗](#)
21. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2013). [↗](#)
22. Jan Voss, *Boekie Woekie 30 Years* (Reykjavik: The Living Art Museum, 2016). [↗](#)

[Bio](#)

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Self-Organization in the Revolutions of Everyday Day (2009), The Composition of Movements to Come: Aesthetics and Cultural Labor After the Avant-Garde (2016), Combination Acts. Notes on Collective Practice in the Undercommons (2019), and editor (with Erika Biddle and David Graeber) of Constituent Imagination: Militant Investigations // Collective Theorization (AK Press, 2007). His research focuses on the emergence of collective imagination in social movements and the changing compositions of cultural and artistic labor.

 [Bio](#)

Joanna Figiel

Joanna Figiel works and lives in Warszawa and London. She holds an MA in Creative Industry from the Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths and recently completed her PhD at the Centre for Culture and the Creative Industries, University of London (“Unpaid work and internships within the cultural and creative sectors: Policy, popular culture, and resistance”). Her research focuses on the changing compositions of labour, precarity, and policy in the creative and cultural sectors. Joanna also works as a [translator](#). She collaborates with Fundacja Bęc Zmiana and Minor Compositions, and in the past she has worked with groups including the Citizen’s Forum for Contemporary Art in Poland and the PWB in the UK, as well as the Free/Slow University of Warsaw and the ArtLeaks collective.



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